

Thesis: We can win this battle we're in!

Read text: *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.* (John 10:10)

I have bad news.

You have an enemy. (The thief who steals, kills, destroys.)

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

ESV

He is out to get you. (Ever since Eden . . .)

He is a fierce and formidable foe!

He's winning far too many times!

Hell is raising its ugly head all around us.

I have good news.

Our adversary has an adversary!

He is the Good Shepherd!

He is the Door!

He is out to help you!

Jesus is a hell-razer! (1 John 3:8 *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.*)

He defeated our adversary.

He gives His followers authority over the adversary.

Luke 9:1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.

Luke 10:18-19 And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

James 4:7-8 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Surely you can sense this cosmic conflict! We are in a war! It is real, and it is continual! We can try to ignore the conflict, but it is still real. We can try to run and hide from the conflict, but flight does not work for the simple reason that the conflict is not just "out there," it's "in here!"

For weeks I have been issuing a call to the followers of Christ. I have a passion to raise up strong followers of Jesus Christ who can raze hell! I am convinced that we do not have to remain passive against the forces of hell. We can "run a rescue shop within a yard of hell" (C.T. Studd)!

So why does it so often seem that we are losing the battle in our lives, our churches, even in America? Let me make two statements:

1. We can win this battle we're in!

2. We can't be Rocky without training!

You remember Rocky, don't you? Let's try Matthew 7:24 together:
Therefore whoever hears these saying of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

I need to train my brain if I am going to gain the victory over the devil!

I need to live in the Word and live by the Word! That brings me back to the challenge I set before you last week: **Seven days a week I will spend at least 24 minutes each day interacting with God through His Word.**

How do I do this? What do I do? I want to share again an ancient practice that I have modified, and spend some time helping you understand how this process can bring you into a more intimate relationship with God, through Christ, with the Holy Spirit as your teacher. Don't forget to ask these questions: Am I saved? Am I submitted? Am I totally dependant upon the Holy Spirit to be my teacher? Am I willing to spend time in Scripture?

Turn with me to the first Psalm, and let me walk you back through the process that is bearing fruit in my own life.

First, I **listen slowly**. *Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . .* I may read one phrase, or even one word, over and over. I am not in a hurry! I am listening for truth and for behaviors I need to embrace; I am listening for lies and God-dishonoring behaviors I need to abandon. I am listening for a word that is very personal – not just *truth* but *truth the Holy Spirit is bringing to me*.

His delight is in the law of the Lord . . . Perhaps here the Spirit arrests my attention. Now I **think deeply**. I roll it over in my mind. I dialogue with God. I talk to myself. I write the words or a paraphrase down in my notebook. I feel a conviction that I have too often treated God's word as a duty, not as my delight. I grieve over my carnality that loves a good novel more than God's word; that reaches for the newspaper or magazine or my Kindle more readily than reaching for God's Word.

I stop, and I **pray fervently** – about my heart, about my spiritual appetite. I see myself as I am; I see God as He is; I see Jesus on the cross; I rejoice in grace and the freedom it brings! I ask God for help – if I could do this on my own, Jesus would not have needed to die on the cross. (By the way, if you feel your praying needs a boost, prioritize your time November 20-22 to learn from Dr. Calvin Miller about the Celtic Path to Prayer.)

I have **listened slowly**; I have **thought deeply**; and I have **prayed fervently**. Now, in the freedom grace gives, I make a fresh commitment to **obey faithfully**! I plan my obedience! I find ways to remind myself of the Word I have heard, so that the devil will not snatch it away before it bears eternal fruit in my life. There is no transformation without obedience!

I return to the text, and repeat the process! When I am through, I choose a Word for Today from all God has spoken to my heart. I seek to train my mind to return often to this truth, and seek to incorporate it into my life – that day!

What if I miss a day? Do I give up and quit? In Dry Holler when the coon dogs could find no fresh trail, we would “call the dogs and go home.” Is that what you will do when things get dry or you fail?

Merle Woolley sent me a way of thinking about this: *I compare most any goal with that of being on a diet. You have a new eating routine all figured out. You are sticking to it, weight is coming off. You feel great. Then one*

day, your wife-mother-??? sets a delicious smelling apple pie in front of you. You cannot say no. You eat a big piece. After all, you are “blowing the diet” might as well really enjoy it.

How many of you have heard the term “blowing the diet?” That seems to mean that the person messed up and ate something they should not have eaten.

Let me ask you this ... say we were going to St Louis. We drive up to I-44 and head east. After a few miles, we see that we need gas. We pull off the exit ramp, turn right to the station next to the interstate. Fill up the tank and head out.

A few miles down the road we discover we turned right from the station and should have turned left. Oh well, we blew the trip. Guess we will just go on down this road.

Blowing the diet makes no more sense than continuing down the wrong road in your car.

What happens if you miss a day on the 7/24 Challenge? Are you finished or do you simply pick it up again the next day?

There is a leadership principle I learned from Maxwell or somebody: “Never overestimate what you can do in a year or underestimate what you can do in five years.” This was addressed to church leaders, especially when they enter a new ministry setting. Let me paraphrase that to the 7/24 Challenge: *Never overestimate what God can do in your life in a year, and never underestimate what He can do in five years!*

Our time in the Word will allow us to know God, to know Christ, to know the Holy Spirit more intimately. As we know Him better, we become more like Him. As we become more like Him, we can say No to the devil with authority! **We can win this battle we’re in!** We can raze hell!